

Victory over Darkness

John 20:1-18

This is Easter, the Victory is won! Darkness defeated, the kingdom of death destroyed. The Dawn of new day has begun!

Grace and peace from our risen Lord to each of you this morning.

It was only a few minutes ago that the Sun overcame the darkness of the night giving life and light to a new day. This is the day the Lord has made, the day we remember that Jesus came back to life, once again we hear that Jesus is risen! He is risen from the dead!

This is the day the Lord has made for us to cheer up, we cheer the fact that darkness will not overcome, it hasn't overcome, actually, it was overcome.

Yes! Darkness was overcome by the Son, God's son who comes to serve us this morning, and so that as he rises from the tomb, may we too rise with him to a new dawn! After all the glory of Christ's resurrection given to us in baptism provides comfort and hope in times of spiritual darkness for he, the risen Christ, is our light and our life.

This is good news for us this morning, just as it was good and wonderful news for the fearful disciples that first Easter day. And it is the good and wonderful news for us here and now, as we continue with each of our journeys in this world. In this dark valley of tears, of uncertainty and of confusion.

Life sometimes can be compared to power outages. You know how it goes, whenever the power goes out but you have no flashlight at hand, trying to find your way around can be hazardous—heads can bump into a wall or a door, feet stumble over a footstool, coffee tables, or whatever is on your way can injure us.

The same could happen when the fire goes out on a camping trip, one never knows what's lurking out there in the bush, ready to pounce on unsuspecting campers.

Yet God, on this very Easter Day, reminds us that God always comes through in the darkest hour of uncertainty! Whether he was rescuing the Israelites from Pharaoh's armies or protecting the three men in the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel, or ordering Abraham to hold back his knife from plunging it into Isaac, God shows himself to be a trustworthy Saviour from life's uncertainties in our darkest moments, especially the darkness of our sins, the darkness that sin causes in our lives and around us in the world.

The resurrection of Christ that we celebrate here this morning reminds us that God's Word always brings light and certainty. Just Jesus had announced it to his disciples, it came to pass, confirming thus and reaffirming that he is a God of light and a God of life. And more, his braking out of the tomb alive, reminds us that his promise is a light that breaks through our uncertainty, and it is life that brakes through our own deaths too. Just as the Sun this morning broke through the night and now is shine all over, so the joy of his light will bring us enjoy a new life in Christ even here while we make our journey on this earth.

It was indeed a light and life that broke first for the disciples that first Easter. Image their condition and state that day. It was still dark for them. But Jesus resurrection broke through their darkness, and what makes it brighter for them, is that now in the light of the risen Christ, everything made sense now. Everything about Christ, about them and their new identity, and their purpose as disciples was clear. Before that, they followed Jesus of course, they heard his promises, the Word was preached, sure Jesus was the Christ, but... it didn't make much sense, especially after he was arrested, tried, crucified and buried. It should have plain and clear to them, but they didn't get it. Those eleven who lived with

Jesus for three years and heard him preach should have known. They, who watched him drive out demons; restore the use of legs, ears, eyes; bring dead back to life—they should have known. They, who watched him calm storms, quiet grieving families, feed hungry crowds—they should have known that what happened on Friday could not possibly be the end of the story. And especially those three who saw him transfigured in radiant glory, who heard him say repeatedly that he would rise from the dead after being put to death—they should have known. They should have known that God would raise Jesus on the third day, they should have known that God could not possibly let his Holy One see corruption.

Truly, their doubts were their darkness indeed, but darkness did not overcome the light. Christ arose victorious over uncertainty! And now he even, with certainty, beholds the name of those disciples, and just as he the risen Christ spoke Mary's name, so he beholds and speaks each of your names today.

So, what dark moments are you facing today? Is there any uncertainty? Uncertainty of your own future perhaps? At times we do face the darkness of uncertainty about our future, financial, health, family. We struggle with doubt about our children's future don't we. A dark cloud of uncertainty and doubt overcome us at times. Even the darkness that a frustrated self-cheering leaves in us can cause doubts and despair. And then we have the most important question, how about the uncertainty of your own salvation? That's where the enemy, satan can overcome us with. He whispers in our ears that we are not good enough to be loved by God, let alone to be saved. But this morning, let the light of Christ's resurrected glory dispel the darkness of those things that cause you to stumble in uncertainty and sin. Turn to your Baptism and know that you belong to Christ and that he cares for you and that in Christ we have the medicine even for death, for Jesus Christ resurrection is our own resurrection,

that is God's medicine for death. Turn to your Big brother for protection and he will cover you with his precious blood!

Darkness is also a word used to describe the world of sin and evil. Job says, "But when I hoped for good, evil came, and when I waited for light, darkness came." (Job 30:26).

And Psalm 91 speaks of "the pestilence that stalks in darkness" (Ps 91:6). That's where the evil one lurks, kill and destroy. For he himself is called "the prince of darkness." And hell is described as the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. That's why the demons trembled, and screamed in agony whenever Jesus came into their presence, because they knew where they were going to end up. They also knew that Jesus, the living light, was overcoming the powers of darkness already and then with his resurrection, he will rise in complete victory over evil. It was Jesus all along shining his light! And it is Jesus all along that will shine in your life too! And with his death he rescued you from the claws of the darkness. When you and couldn't do anything about it, he gave his life to rescue us, to save us. So, are you uncertain of your salvation? Remember there is nothing you can do about it. He did it all, now just be assured that what he did on the cross was for you. You are saved, and now because he is alive, you will be alive too.

In fact, through your baptism you are given the gift of that salvation, and with that his light too. For in Baptism, we were joined to Christ Jesus, and through that union, we receive all that is his. We now walk in his light.

Now, I can't promise that the risen Christ will heal your tumour. I can't promise that the resurrected Lord will restore your sight or hearing or mobility. I can't promise that he'll do for you any of those things he did for Palestinians of his day. I know he can do that even now, and he has done it in many lives. Regardless we need to know that any of those kinds of miracles are a

foreshadow of the new creation he'll restore on the Last Day. Jesus miracles during his ministry here on earth, or even the ones we hear of today, they were, they are the early rays of the promised new day piercing the darkness caused by sin. That I can promise, after all if you are in his hands everything will go according to his plan and will!

So, it is fitting that on this Easter Sunrise Service we remember our baptism, that in the light of this day we should call it our Resurrection Baptism. And for those who haven't been baptized yet, to pray that the Lord would be you to do so, because, as the baptized remember, baptism joins us, unite us with him through those gracious waters, and in that baptized state desires that we would walk in his light. St. Paul writes, "For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8).

Remember that in your Baptism, you were transferred from the kingdom of darkness and made a child of the light! Therefore, know for certain that whatever evils threaten you, they have no more power. They live only on whatever credibility and strength you give them, so when they assail you, turn to Christ in confidence that the light of his resurrection has triumphed over evil, and his triumph is also your triumph.

Long ago God promised through the prophet Isaiah that he would remove the shroud of death, and he has done that by raising his Son to life. And as the Father has raised his Son from the death, in him, through him, by him and for him, He will also resurrect us on the last day to the eternal light of Christ in a glorified body. So then, what this day reminds us, is that what happened to Jesus by the working of God will one day happen to us too. You and I and all the faithful will be raised from the darkness of death to the light of eternal life. Why? As St. Paul writes, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:5). And even

when on this side of eternity, you will not experience the miracle of healing, one truth remains, that at the resurrection of the death, our bodies will be fully restored, fully healed, made anew. No pain, no suffering anymore. Only the eternal light of Christ forever.

That is God's promise to you, and it's fitting for us to remember that promise by recalling our Baptism. If you grieve over the loss of loved ones in death, grieve not as those who have no hope. The darkness of the grave has been turned into only a shadow of the valley of death. The light of Christ's resurrection enlightens us with promise: "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

Because you have been buried with him by Baptism into a death like his, you will also be raised to a new life like his in resurrected glory.

So, turn to the light of Christ. Let the Word that you've heard remind you of God's power and grace and strengthen you with Christ's promises. They are just as sure and certain as the sunrise that scatters this darkness and brings the new day.

Alleluia Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!